I'm Yours

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I'm Yours

by JSinister32

Summary

> “Hannibal? What—”
>
> “He has pneumonia, Jack.”
>
> Silence greeted him from the other end of the call. Hannibal refused to be the first one to speak; irritation built beneath his skin like water rising in a flooded room.
>
> “Are you certain?” the other man finally asked. Hannibal pinched the bridge of his nose and glanced back at Will, slumbering in his chair, shivers yet to subside. It took everything in him for his voice to come out even.
>
> “Are you questioning my ability to diagnose my patients?”

When Will Graham stumbles into Hannibal's office, obviously ill, Hannibal makes either the best or worst decision of his life.

Notes

Hi My Darlings,

Welcome to the chaptered fic for this year's holiday advent! While I didn't get a chance to do much for the holidays last year, this year is shaping up to be quite different. Although the actual one-shot advent doesn't begin until Wednesday, we've got to get the ball rolling on this story so we can wrap it up by Christmas. This fic will update every Sunday until Christmas.

I hope this season is full of warm hugs, snuggles beneath blankets, and as much good fiction as you could ask for.

Adore you all. Enjoy.

Hearts and Body Parts,
🤍JM

NOTE: I do not allow translations or additional archiving locations. Please let me know if you find this work anywhere except AO3, posted by me. I hate adding this note, but I hate my work being stolen even more. Thank you for understanding.

See the end of the work for more notes

An Unexpected Turn of Events

I knew I did from that
First moment we met. It was…
Not love at first sight exactly,
But - familiarity.
-Mhairi McFarlane

If he was to look back and pinpoint the moment his entire life took a monumental shift, Hannibal Lecter would have skipped over the actual event entirely. His life had been exactly how he wanted it, thank you very much. He had a thriving psychiatric business, a working relationship with the highest authorities in the great city of Baltimore, and a sterling reputation that would have taken God himself to tarnish. Safely ensconced in comfort and decadence, he could have carried on forever, feasting on those who were unfortunate enough to find themselves on his radar, eluding the police, all while on retainer with the FBI to assist with profiles that needed a second pair of eyes.

Had he known then that he'd be saddled with taking care of the moodiest, most volatile man he'd ever encountered, he might have chosen to change the trajectory of his actions, but alas, hindsight and hubris have a way of being 20/20. The man in question, Will Graham, resident outcast within the prestigious walls of Quantico, was the bane of Hannibal's existence for all of the wrong reasons. He understood the empathy disorder that did its best to keep the profiler's pulse jumping beneath the thin skin of his throat better than most - it had been the subject of his final thesis at Johns Hopkins, after all. He was fully aware that the other man sat somewhere on the spectrum and did his best to appear normal in most situations, even if it was just to keep Jack Crawford off his back.

He knew these things because of their discussions - each precious millimeter of Will's internal forts that crumbled during their time together made his heart ache in ways it would take his final undoing to fully understand. He knew Will wanted to be understood, included as part of a team instead of the weird outsider that showed up when a case was impossible to solve. Those in the Violent Crimes sector did their best to drag him into their social sphere, even if he kicked and screamed in protest. The problem was, Hannibal didn't seem to be able to say no to anything that had to do with the profiler, even if it went against his own code of conduct.

It was this very weakness that proved to be his undoing.

It started off simple enough; innocuous requests from Jack Crawford that he regarded with the seriousness they deserved; not much, if he was honest with himself. Jack had a tendency to allow Will to enter situations that exacerbated his mental fragility; a crime for which Hannibal hoped to hold him accountable one day. For the time being, he feigned friendship with the senior agent, as it suited the persona he currently wore far better than any of the bespoke fabric in his closet, and worked behind the scenes to care for Will's wellbeing as best

he could. He carried on fulfilling the mundane duties asked of him, all the while ignorant of what would happen when he lowered his guard.

One afternoon, and one seemingly harmless text message later, Hannibal world was turned on its end.

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[06:40PM] **Hello Hannibal. I hope the cold turn to the weather is treating you well.**

Hannibal stared at the message that glared up from his phone as if it was going to bite him; seeing as it was from Jack Crawford, there was the very real possibility it would. Still, it would do him no good to ignore it, no matter how much he wanted to. The senior agent and head of the Violent Crimes unit would not wait forever for him to respond; if he was lucky, Jack would simply call. If he wasn't, the other man would show up at his office and pound on the door until he was admitted, disrupting his peace before Will arrived for his weekly appointment. Hannibal inhaled a deep, frustrated breath and opened his messages, tapping out a reply before he could stop himself.

[06:44PM] *Good evening, Agent Crawford. To what do I owe the pleasure?*

He hit send and turned the phone over, wondering briefly if Jack could sense his irritation through over the distance that separated them. He suspected that, even if Jack could feel the tension through the line, he would do what he always did and simply choose to ignore him. Sure enough, Jack's response glossed over his subtle vitriol, continuing as if Hannibal had been positively pleasant.

[06:46PM] **A man that appreciates cutting to the chase - I've always liked that about you, Doctor. I know Will's appointment is to occur in the next few minutes and need to ask you a favor.**

[06:49PM] *I'm listening.*

[06:51PM] **I understand that there is some reluctance with assisting me, Hannibal, but I promise you, this request is not without cause.**

[06:52PM] *You're wasting time waxing poetic, Jack. Will is due to arrive within the hour and I cannot guarantee that I will see or respond to your request if you do not get to the point with some haste.*

[06:54PM] **You know, you are no easier to work with than he is. Fine. Will isn't behaving in his usual manner. Although he's normally several levels of unpleasant at crime scenes, today concerned me for several reasons, which I do not wish to divulge to you at this time. Please ascertain what is going on with him and report back to me when your session has concluded.**

Hannibal stared at his phone, disbelief and the beginnings of anger coursing through his system. *Surely he cannot be ignorant enough to believe I would agree to this. Surely—*

[06:55PM] *I want to be absolutely certain you understand what you're asking me to do, Agent. You'd like me to delve into the depths of Will's mind and tattle on him with the things that should be held in the utmost confidence. Is that what you're asking me to do?*

The three dots indicating Jack was typing appeared and disappeared several times before a message finally came though.

[06:58PM] **Yes.**

Hannibal studied the three letters staring back at him and counted backwards from ten to tamp down his outrage. *As if I would tell you anything Will entrusts me to keep between us. How dare you even insinuate—*

[06:59PM] **I know this isn't information you'd normally divulge, but I don't believe it's his mental state that's at risk at this time. He… well, I'm ashamed to admit it, but he almost passed out at a crime scene today. I'm uncertain if this is something to do with the particular scene in question, or if he's not feeling well in general. All I ask is that you find out if he's fit to be out in the field. We've got eight ongoing cases and I need him at his best.**

[07:00PM] *I cannot, in conscience, divulge any information about my patients to you, Jack.*

[07:03PM] **Not even if it will keep Will safe? Plus, you keep telling me that Will is not officially your patient. That you two are merely having conversations.**

Hannibal snorted. *Low hanging fruit, Agent Crawford.*

[07:05PM] *Need I remind you that Will's wellbeing is also your responsibility?*

[07:08PM] **A responsibility that I am attempting to fulfill, Hannibal. I need your help to do so.**

[07:10PM] *I will observe Will's current physical wellbeing, for the sake of his heath. I would like to make one thing abundantly clear - I am not your lackey, Agent Crawford. I do not, nor will I ever answer to the authority of the FBI when it comes to the care of my patients.*

[07:12PM] **Understood. Thank you for your assistance, Doctor Lecter.**

Hannibal locked his phone without sending a response. In light of the new information provided to him, he gathered a blanket from the closet at the back of his office and draped it over the back of Will's customary seat, taking care to ensure its presence appeared purely for aesthetic purposes. The profiler didn't take kindly to those who tried to help him.

It makes me feel weak - like I'm seen as lesser, he'd confessed to Hannibal after the doctor had offered to bandage his damaged knuckles in wake of a physical altercation with a suspect that had resisted arrest, much to his own detriment. *I already know what everyone thinks of me. I don't need to perpetuate that stereotype by being coddled.*

Hannibal hadn't told him the physical effect his wounds had had on the doctor's body. He didn't need to explain to him the intricacies of attraction - Hannibal chalked it up to the

roiling pit of violence Will let simmer just beneath the surface, waiting until just the right catalyst to let it simmer over. For a brief moment in time, he'd seen the true darkness that existed inside Will Graham, and it had done funny things to his libido. Hannibal pushed it away at Will's refusal of his assistance, forced himself to think of something - anything else.

If the thought flashed through his mind occasionally while he was showering, well. It was his own cross to bear.

With his preparations in place, Hannibal threw an additional log on the fire and made himself a cup of tea, letting the soothing routine of measuring out tea leaves into his strainer ease the bitter frustration he'd felt while dealing with the likes of Jack Crawford. By the time he settled back into his chair, Hannibal felt as at ease as he had before the senior agent's request. He sipped his drink and watched the clock, counting down the minutes until Will's appointment, mentally walking himself through the questions he'd need to ask Will when he arrived.

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At 7:30 on the dot, Hannibal's office door flung open, slamming against the wood paneling with a deafening crack. Will stumbled through, wiping his brow with the hand that wasn't braced on the frame of the door, preventing him from face-planting into the hardwood floors. He was white as a sheet; the bright sheen of sweat was visible from where Hannibal sat, braced in his seat as if to ward off a blow. Will panted hard and righted himself before closing the door behind him, leaning into the barrier as if it was all that kept him conscious.

"'Lo, Doctor," he rasped between great, wheezing gasps of air. "Sorry for the brusque entrance. Wind is stronger than I suspected."

"It's quite all right," Hannibal managed, rising halfway from his chair. "I'm pleased you're here, Will. Can I make you something to drink? It's quite cold out there tonight." Will shook his head and divested himself of his coat; it took him three tries to get it onto the hook mounted by the door for the use of Hannibal's patients.

"'M all right. Just need to sit for a minute."

Hannibal nodded and sank back into the armchair he occupied; he hadn't realized he'd begun to stand before Will declined his offer. Will bent to remove his shoes; stared at them as if he'd never seen them before. With a great, heaving sigh, he sank to the floor and worked the laces open with all the precision of a five year old - fumbling fingers that seemed far too large for the intricate knots. It took him several minutes to give up entirely.

"Stupid laces," he muttered beneath the wheeze of his breath. "'Verything's too hard right now."

A hand appeared in his hazy field of vision; Will followed the fingers up to Hannibal's worried eyes. Resigned, the other man took the proffered limb and allowed himself to be pulled from the floor. Hannibal wrapped an arm around his shoulders to steady him; weak, Will leaned into the doctor's warmth. He allowed himself to be guided in short, unhurried

steps as Hannibal ushered him across the room. The walk seemed farther than he remembered it being. Everything felt suddenly and morosely out of his reach.

"You seem to be a bit under the weather," Hannibal observed. His grip on Will's shoulders tightened unconsciously, as if he alone could shield Will from the sickness that was so obviously riding him down. The sickly sweet smell of fever rolled off the profiler's skin in waves; Hannibal wrinkled his nose, but did not relinquish his grasp. *Foolish man. Now is not the time for strength. You need to be home and in bed.*

"'M fine, Hannibal," Will slurred. "Stop mothering me. I just need to rest a minute."

They made their way to the fireside. Will sank into his customary chair with a sigh, curling up as much as the small piece of furniture would allow. His eyes shuttered closed of their own volition - in less than five minutes, the profiler fell into a restless sleep.

Hannibal hovered at his side, strangely unable to move. His fingertips grazed Will's brow without express permission from his brain; Will's eyes fluttered, but remained closed. He allowed himself to trace the curve of Will's cheek, to brush back a lock of his sweat-damp curls. A blanket of abnormal heat rose from Will's forehead, a temperature with which Hannibal was all too familiar. *Of all of the states I expected him to be in, having pneumonia is not what I would have ascertained from Jack's description. It appears he has worked been worked to the point of absolute exhaustion - his body is giving out on him.*

"Will," Hannibal murmured, brushing an unconscious hand through the profiler's curls. The other man didn't stir. The hand in his hair remained; Hannibal massaged the profiler's fevered scalp in soft, soothing circles, lost in thought. *What to do now? He cannot possibly be left to his own devices, but if I send him to a hospital in his weakened state, he'll likely catch something in addition to what already ails him. But what other course of action is available to me?*

Curled up in the chair, Will let out a quiet whimper; a shiver wracked his lithe form. Hannibal swallowed hard and let his hands trail to the back of the other man's neck; the muscles beneath his fingers felt like bedrock - painfully tight with the force of his shivering. An odd feeling of pity lanced its way through Hannibal's heart; the force of the emotion took him by complete surprise. *Pity for a man who loathes the mere mention of such emotions, but I cannot help wanting to ensure his wellbeing.*

Hannibal stood and gathered the blanket he'd placed on the back of the chair. Without thinking too hard on what he was doing, he draped it over Will's form and wrapped the edges beneath him. Will made another soft noise and burrowed beneath the fleece until all Hannibal could see was the top of his curls. Satisfied, the doctor stood and made his way to his desk to collect his phone, dialing Jack's number from memory. It only took three rings for the senior agent to answer.

"Hannibal? What—"

"He has pneumonia, Jack."

Silence greeted him from the other end of the call. Hannibal refused to be the first one to speak; irritation built beneath his skin like water rising in a flooded room.

“Are you certain?” the other man finally asked. Hannibal pinched the bridge of his nose and glanced back at Will, slumbering in his chair, shivers yet to subside. It took everything in him for his voice to come out even.

“Are you questioning my ability to diagnose my patients?”

“Not at all. But this isn’t a matter of the mind—”

“How very astute,” Hannibal growled. “It is not a sickness for which my services can be retained, yet here I am, an ill member of the FBI passed out beneath a blanket by my fire while his superior refuses to acknowledge his obvious need for care.”

Hannibal could hear the other man shrink in on himself; the monster beneath the person suit he wore stretched and purred. *Now is not the time to feel pleasure. Not when Will may very well be in danger.*

“Does he need to go to a hospital?” Hannibal shook his head, only belatedly realizing Jack couldn’t see him.

“A hospital is not the best place for him. I’m afraid his illness has progressed to the point where he will likely catch anything from those he rooms with. It would be best to arrange personal care for him until he is well enough to remain home on his own.”

“And how long do you anticipate he will be out of commission?” Hannibal’s blood went cold.

“Please tell me,” he bit out, “that you are not suggesting you care more for the cases on which you are currently working over the physical wellbeing of a man who didn’t want to be taken out into the field in the first place.”

The other line remained silent for so long, Hannibal had to check to ensure Jack hadn’t ended the call.

“You don’t understand,” the agent finally responded. “There are so many lives at stake if Will—”

“No, *you* don’t understand,” Hannibal cut off Jack’s words. “Will is in very real danger if he does not receive proper medical care. If he doesn’t recover, he won’t be able to assist you ever again, because he will no longer be with us.”

“Then send him to the hospital.”

“No,” Hannibal replied, his voice glacial. “I will not be sending him to further harm.”

“Then what do you propose, Hannibal?” Jack bellowed, exasperated. “If he needs care—”

The sudden, awful realization of his decision came to him; before he could give himself a chance to change his mind, Hannibal cut him off once more.

“Will is coming home with me. At least if he is in my care, I can see to it that he heals properly.”

“You aren’t a doctor, Hannibal.”

“But I was,” Hannibal reasoned. “A surgeon, to be exact. He will be treated better in my home than he could ever hope in a hospital setting.”

“You can’t—”

“I’m afraid the decision has already been made. I’m taking Will home, Jack. And if you interfere, I’ll be certain that you are brought up on charges of gross neglect of the physical and emotional wellbeing of your agents.”

The silence on the other end of the line was thunderous.

“Why do you suddenly care?” Jack asked. “I’ve never known you to take more than a cursory interest in Will’s health.”

“It doesn’t concern you, Agent Crawford,” Hannibal replied smoothly. “The only thing that matters is I will be taking Will home with me. I will contact you again when he is well enough to receive visitors.”

“He won’t thank you for it,” Jack warned. “If anything, he’s likely to resent you for thinking him weak.” Hannibal snorted at the obvious attempt to circumvent his decision.

“Then he resents me. At least he will be alive. Good day, Jack.”

“Hannibal—”

Hannibal ended the call with a satisfying press of a thumb and pocketed his phone. He strode to the fire and put up the fire panel - the flames would go out on their own, once they ran out of fuel. He packed away what few belongings he’d need for the weekend ahead of him, collecting patient files in the messenger bag he kept inside his desk, but so rarely needed to use. As an afterthought, he gathered his appointment book as well, tucking it inside before slinging the bag over his head. His coat went on next, buttoned to the throat to stave off the cold. Hannibal let himself out of his office and made his way to his car, unlocking the doors to deposit his belongings in the back seat. He backed the vehicle slowly out of its spot and moved it as close to the doors as he could get before returning to his office.

Hannibal glanced around the room, searching for anything out of place; anything he’d forgotten to do. Satisfied with his inspection, he turned off the lamp on his desk; only then did he turn back to the man asleep in his chair.

“Do not resent me too much for this,” he whispered as he moved to closer. Without so much as breaking a sweat, the doctor carefully lifted Will’s prone figure into his arms. “Up we get,

Agent Graham. We still have some time yet before you're settled somewhere comfortable enough for prolonged sleep."

Burden of Care

Chapter Summary

A little bit of coherence, a lot of irritation with one another, a tiny sprinkling of truth between them. Oh. And chicken soup.

Chapter Notes

My deepest apologies for the delay. Editing got away from me, but here we go!

Adore you guys.
-jm.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Falling for you wasn't falling
At all. It was walking into a house
And suddenly realizing
I'm home.

Will's eyes cracked open painfully. He wasn't sure what had woken him, not really; the room he was in was unfamiliar but comfortable and warm. The light that surrounded him was muted in the sort of hazy darkness that came with high quality curtains; the kind that filtered just enough light to obscure the time of day, leaving the room in comfortable light, no matter what time it was. He took as deep of a breath as he could without coughing, letting the soft, familiar scent that filled his lungs drag him back beneath the heavy weight of sleep.

The second time some semblance of consciousness filtered into his mind, it was to uncomfortable physical sensation. A warm, damp cloth pressed gently against his forehead, wiping away the vestiges of his fever with a practiced hand. Will leaned unconsciously into the touch; into the weight that dipped down on one side of the mattress. Everything ached; his throat felt as if it had been filled with needles; his skin was hot, tight and painful. He could feel the fever that rode him down, but could not gain enough of his faculties about him to recognize if for what it was. The cloth scratched against his face; he tried to make his hands move, to swipe it away, but everything felt too heavy to move properly. The wielder of the material paused. The cloth was taken away without hesitation, replaced by a cool, soft hand. Will let the comfort of its weight relax him back into the mattress, only slightly aware when the hand was taken away as well, and the mattress shifted as his caregiver stood and

strode from the room. If the person returned, he was unaware; sleep and sickness overtook him within moments of the other person's departure.

When Will was finally roused from his fitful slumber, it was to a quiet knock at the door and the most delicious scent he'd ever smelled wafting through his senses like a particularly delectable ghost. The doorknob turned, loud in the hushed quiet of the room in which he was resting. Will took a deep, painful breath and pushed his weight into his hands. Everything felt heavy; painful; exhausting beyond his capability to handle. The breath he'd taken wheezed from his lungs, drawing a painful cough into his throat. Defeated, he sank back beneath the blankets as a head full of silver and gold hair emerged from the gap in the doorway. Shoulders followed a long, lean torso - only belatedly did Will recognize his caregiver as none other than Doctor Hannibal Lecter. *But not that kind of doctor. So what—*

"Good evening, Will. It's good to see you awake at last."

The doctor's voice soothed over his raw nerves like honey to a burn; Will attributed the heat in his cheeks to his fever and nothing more. Hannibal's uncanny ability to ease his spinning mind in every situation never failed to simultaneously calm and infuriate him - waking to being cared for by him was no exception. Hannibal moved through the room with a feline grace Will had long since ceased envying; it didn't stop him from watching the other man come closer, wariness dancing along the edge of his foggy mind. Hannibal offered a small smile and sank into the chair beside the bed, relaxing back into it as if having Will in his home was a regular occurrence. *Yet I have no reason to be here. No reason for him to take an interest.*

Will opened his mouth to ask a question; Hannibal silenced him with a glance. Irritated, Will settled back and let his eyes shutter closed. If he appeared to fall back to sleep, maybe Hannibal would disappear back into the rest of the house. Will's luck, as usual, didn't favor him; Hannibal stayed where he was, quiet breaths the only indication that he remained in the room. *Two can play at this game, Doc. And I promise I won't be the one to break.*

Will's stomach did it for him; hunger twisted it upon itself, and it let out a rumble, breaking them out of their stalemate. Hannibal sat up in the chair; straightened his spine and schooled his features into the man Will was used to seeing across the battlefield of the doctor's office during his appointments. He hadn't realized how relaxed Hannibal had been until that very moment; he almost missed the softness in the other man's features that had been there only moments before. *It doesn't matter. I need to find out what is going on.*

"I'm making dinner," Hannibal began, breaking the silence between them. Will nodded slowly; his head felt as if it was filled with cotton, his throat burned like dry fire. He didn't trust himself to speak just yet, but inclined his head for Hannibal to continue.

"I will have medication ready for you to take as well, but not until you get some food into your stomach. I'm sure you have questions; they're likely best left to a time with a little more coherence, but I would be happy to answer any you currently have."

Will remained silent. His head was spinning; he felt weak, frustrated that he couldn't formulate any kind of response to Hannibal's statement. The doctor sat where he was for a beat; when Will chose not to speak, he nodded and stood.

“Would you like some assistance with sitting up in bed?” Will adamantly shook his head. Hannibal sighed, but didn’t push the issue. “Very well. I will return shortly with food and some medication. Try not to fall back to sleep.”

Will waited until the door fell closed before he tried once more to sit up in bed. His hands felt slick, useless where they clawed at the sheets. His stomach turned; throat burned as he drew painful gasps of air into them. He wanted to close his eyes. He wanted to sleep. He wanted to weep. Everything felt hot, cloying; too much. For the second time that night, he let himself fall against the blankets, let his heart rate cease its incessant pounding while he formulated another plan. *I can’t let him see me like this. I am not weak. I don’t want him to think of me like—*

He didn’t allow himself to finish the thought. With an almost maniac determination, Will pushed himself halfway up, and yanked at the blankets caught around his legs. He felt more tangled than a fish in a net; spots began to form in his vision as he fought the sheets and struggled to stand. He was so caught up in what he was attempting to do, he missed the sound of the door opening; the quiet curse that escaped Hannibal’s lips as a tray was set atop the chest of drawers on the far side of the room. Hannibal strode quickly towards the bed and laid a hand to Will’s chest, stilling his frantic movements. *I can’t —*

“Calm yourself, Will,” the doctor instructed firmly. Will stilled instantly, panting wheezing breaths into the heavy air. Hannibal moved to pull at the sheets caught around the profiler’s legs; Will shook his head as hard as he dared. The doctor stood, pinched the bridge of his nose as he fought to control his frustration. When their eyes met, Will knew he’d lost whatever battle he’d been attempting to begin; it didn’t mean he’d go down without a fight.

“You’re expending good energy of which you do not have in excess in a futile attempt to accomplish a task that would take moments to rectify with my assistance,” Hannibal reprimanded. “Please. Let me help you.”

Will’s heart thumped hard against his ribs.

“I can do it myself,” he managed to rasp out. “I am not weak.”

He steeled himself as best he could manage, and braced his hands on the mattress. A large, warm hand pressed into his chest, holding him gently in place.

“You are not weak,” Hannibal agreed. “You are ill. All of the time you spend running yourself ragged at Uncle Jack’s insistence has finally caught up with you.” The hand on his chest eased; fingertips stroked gently down Will’s shirt, sending soft, arcing tingles along his fevered nerves. The profiler suppressed a shiver; relaxed into the touch.

“I—”

“You,” Hannibal cut him off, “need to rest and let someone else take the burden of care from your shoulders for a time. Let me help you, and you’ll be on your feet before you know it.” Will coughed weakly into his hand.

“So what? I’m just supposed to let you baby me?” Hannibal grinned and removed his hand completely. Will didn’t want to admit it, but he already missed the comfort of the doctor’s touch.

“No. But I do request that you allow me to treat your condition so that you may return to your previous existence no worse for wear.”

“…fine.” Hannibal arched a brow, but chose his words with care.

“Thank you, Will. Lean into me and I will help you sit up.”

Hannibal’s hands returned, slid beneath his shoulders. Will didn’t fight; together they shifted his weight until he was seated back against a mound of pillows. The pressure on his lungs eased a tiny bit at the change in position, but the feel of Hannibal’s hands beneath him did nothing for the frantic fluttering of his heart. *Why am I even reacting like this?*

“Perfectly settled,” Hannibal murmured, closer than Will expected him to be. Their eyes met briefly; the softness in Hannibal’s bloodstained gaze was unfamiliar. Will didn’t know what to do with it. He looked away, searching for something, anything to anchor him in the room and not to how he felt. His eyes fell to the tray of food waiting for him; his stomach twisted painfully. Hannibal took the momentary distraction to retrieve the food he’d brought with; the tray he produced fit over the profiler’s lap, sitting on two metal legs at eating height. A white porcelain bowl filled most of the space, fragrant golden broth wafting into Will’s senses, focusing his concentration on consuming every last bite of what Hannibal had made him. Beside it sat a tall glass of water and a packet of large red pills. Will picked up the spoon and tasted the broth - it was every bit as delicious as it looked.

“What are these?” he asked after a few spoonfuls. He gestured with the utensil in his fist to the packet of pills.

“Antibiotics.”

“For what, exactly?” Hannibal shifted the tray lower and laid a hand to the startled profiler’s sternum.

“What—”

“Breathe in for me, Agent Graham,” Hannibal cut him off. “Please.”

“What will that prove?” Will didn’t miss the frustrated sound at the back of Hannibal’s throat.

“Humor me.”

The profiler closed his eyes and carefully breathed in. The movement was painful; he could hear the distinct crackle in his lungs as they failed to stretch to their usual capacity.

“What does that mean?” he asked, coughing as Hannibal stepped back and replaced the tray.

“It means you have pneumonia,” the doctor replied. “And it means that the infection can be treated with antibiotics. Those pills are nothing more than Azithromycin - a common medication that will speed your recovery.” Will eyed the packet distrustfully.

“You’re a psychiatrist. How can you possibly know what I have?”

“I wasn’t always a psychiatrist,” Hannibal explained simply. “Once upon a time, I was a medical doctor - a surgeon to be exact, which I also explained to your superior at length. The Bureau has list access to your medical records, which I procured to ensure you’d not have any kind of allergic reaction to the medication I prescribed. I assure you, you’ll suffer no adverse effects from them.”

“I’m just supposed to believe that?”

Hannibal’s answering smile was glacial; his eyes cooled - the person staring back at him was not the man Will was accustomed to seeing at crime scenes or Quantico. He suddenly felt very small; helpless - a rabbit in a snare.

“What reason have I given you to mistrust me?” *Nothing more than the look on your face when I question you, Doctor Lecter.*

“I don’t even know what I’m doing here - how I got here,” Will blurted to keep the thoughts in his head from escaping his lips. “The last thing I remember is leaving another godforsaken crime scene and heading to your office.”

“You arrived at my office, Agent Graham,” Hannibal confirmed, “and promptly fell against the door unconscious. I guessed at your illness in that location and confirmed it when I brought you here - your pneumonia has progressed to the alarming rattle you can now hear in your lungs. I could have taken you to a hospital, but I feared their proclivity for uncleanliness and staffing issues would have done you more harm than good. The only other option was to bring you home with me. You cannot currently take care of yourself. Using the years of training I have in treating physical ailments, I decided you were safer with me.”

Will sat silent, stunned at the doctor’s revelation and his sudden frustration with himself. *The burden he’s taken on for me is… not insignificant. Surprising but easily avoided if he’d just taken me elsewhere.*

“I know this is not the venue you would have chosen,” Hannibal continued. “So I will do what I can to expedite your stay with me. Please. Finish your food and take the medication. I have retrieved your cell phone - it’s beside you on the table. You’re welcome to confirm what I have told you with Agent Crawford, but for the time being, I am afraid you are to remain with me.”

Hannibal stood and marched towards the door, back rigid; shoulders a solid line of obvious stress. Will instantly felt guilty; the man had done nothing but attempted to help him, and instead, he’d chosen to attack him as if he was some kind of villain. *In my line of work, it’s best to assume the worst and hope—*

“Hannibal I—”

“Finish your meal,” Hannibal cut in, hand on the doorknob. “For the time being, if you need anything, please text me instead of attempting to talk. It will save you some pain in your throat.” The doctor pulled the door open and slipped through without turning around. “Let me know when you have finished and I will collect your tray.”

The door to Will’s room fell closed with a resounding click. *Fuck.*

Will sighed and picked up the spoon, but his appetite was all but gone. It took 30 minutes to finish the soup; without thinking too much on it, he opened the packet of pills and emptied them into his hand eying them with no small amount of suspicion before swallowing them down with the remains of his water.

Will settled back against the covers and let his eyes fall closed, exhausted to his very bones. In mere minutes, he fell into a quiet and peaceful sleep.

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Hannibal waited a full hour to check on Will’s wellbeing. He’d expected the questions; even the obvious distrust when he’d told the profiler how he’d come to make the decisions that lead to him being Hannibal’s patient. He’d expected the frustration and push back - welcomed it as a sign of Will’s functioning mind.

What he hadn’t foreseen was how Will’s questions pertaining his motives would make his heart twinge. *It does not matter. He will be back to himself in no time, and no longer my immediate concern. We just need to get through the next few days.*

The door to Will’s room opened on silent hinges; Hannibal stepped into the space, leaving the door open behind him. He took a deep breath; the scent of Will’s fever clung to the very air, but beneath it was the comforting salt-and-citrus of the profiler’s shampoo, a scent that was distinctly Will. Hannibal crept closer, holding his breath without full awareness of he was doing. As he neared the bed, his breath pushed out hard from his lungs.

Even with pneumonia riding him down, Will was beautiful.

His face was flush with fever, eyes fluttering beneath veined lids. The rattle in his lungs was more prominent now that he wasn’t trying to control it, but the vulnerability added to an appeal Hannibal had never dared acknowledge until that very moment. He resisted brushing the curls back from the profiler’s brow; if he was caught, Will would not be happy with being touched without his consent. Instead, Hannibal picked up the tray from the ground, noting with satisfaction that the medication was gone. *So he is willing to take the chance at trusting me, after all.*

The thought brought a small smile to Hannibal’s lips. *Progress.*

He didn’t dare look into Will’s sleeping face again; he made his way to the door as quietly as he could, closing it firmly behind him.

Twenty minutes later, as he was stripping to shower, his phone pinged quietly from where it was plugged in on his night stand. Hannibal retrieved it with some haste, already sourcing a

shirt to toss on in case Will needed something from him.

The text he'd received made him pause.

[09:11PM] Are you still up?

[09:13PM] *Of course. Did you need something?*

[09:16PM] No. I'm okay. But I have a question for you.

Hannibal frowned and typed out a reply.

[09:17PM] *You have but to ask.*

The response came slower than he'd expected; Will seemed to be trying to select his words carefully, but the wait only served to make the doctor's blood pressure pulse at his temples. *What can be so difficult to voice at such a juncture in our association?*

[09:21PM] You could have taken me to a hospital. I know the line you gave me about how far gone I am, but it doesn't ring completely true. Since we are separated by the distance texting allows, I wanted to ask you again. Why did you choose to bring me into your home?

It was Hannibal's turn to pause. He began to type several times; each time, the words felt false. In the end, he chose complete honesty - the kind that could only be wrested from his grasp by Will's capable hands.

[09:28PM] *I do not know.*

[09:30PM] I see. Thank you for your honesty. And… thanks, Hannibal. For taking me in and risking your own health to see to mine.

[09:33PM] *You're most welcome, Will.*

[09:34PM] I'm going to try and sleep now. Talk to you in the morning.

[09:35PM] *Indeed. Good night. Text if you need anything at all.*

[09:36PM] Will do. Sweet dreams.

Hannibal locked his screen and took a seat on the mattress, his shower forgotten in the inexplicable conversation he'd just had. In the end, he pulled down his covers and slipped beneath the sheets without it, exhaustion overriding his need for cleanliness. He shut off his bedside lamp and retrieved his phone, unlocking it to stare at the lines of text between Will and him. He reread the lines until his vision blurred, but was no closer to discerning the meaning between the lines.

When he finally slept, the phone was still clutched in his hands, Will's words shining brightly up at his softly illuminated face.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Chapter End Notes

Housekeeping!

Guys. First of all, brat Will has got me in a chokehold. This story is going to go some fun places. Please don't worry about angst though - it's brief before Hannibal is just eating out of Will's hand.

Other things! We've got a holiday advent coming up. It's already started a little, but there will be more in the coming weeks. December's calendar will be up on Thursday, so check it out in my bio. The Twitter post will be linked there if you're curious as to what's coming up.

ALSO. Babes. Darlings. All you wonderful fucking people. For those of you who don't follow my gushing on social media. I surpassed 400 followers on AO3 this past week. I actually cried big, ugly tears. Not exaggerating. Thank you so much for your constant love and support over this crazy ride of the past two and a half years (almost). For those of you who follow me, Jesus Christ, you folks are something. For those of you who come and read, leave me kudos or comments, or just come for the stories - from the bottom of my dark little heart.

Thank you for making my writing experience for you what it is. I sincerely love every single one of you.

Adore you. See you in the next.

Hearts and Body Parts,
🤍JM

End Notes

We are off to a spicy-sweet start, aren't we?

Housekeeping:
I won't be updating any backlogged fics until after the New Year. Instead, I will continue the tradition of a ficlet advent for you guys, beginning right around Thanksgiving and ending with something fun for New Years. After that, we will pick up the back log with Battle Scars.

As always, if you want to look at the upcoming schedule, it's available on Twitter (as long as it's still standing) and Instagram. After the New Year and during the break before our next round of stories, I may revisit the idea of Discord to keep you guys up to date.

I also want to remind you all, as we move into the holidays, that you are all worthy. You're all deeply cared for here in this community, even if you never say a word. I know how hard this time of year is for some, and will do what I can to bring some light, life and fun into what I do. Please feel free to stop by anywhere I am and say hello. I'm always up for a chat. I love you guys. Happy holidays, and see you in the next.
-JM

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!